(a) whether it is a fact that the performance of export for the year 1998-99 has been dismal;

(b) if so, what are the reasons for this slump; and

(c) what is Government action plan to revive our exports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) As per the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics (DGCI&S) data, the exports achieved a provisional growth rate 3.7% during 1998-99. Low growth rate in export has been partly due to international factors such as the South-East Asian cirsis.

(c) A number of steps have been taken to promote exports which include reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation and simplification of procedures and various other measures

Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions.

Revival of Tea Gardens

11. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that starvation conditions are prevailing since long in the tea gradens under Central Government in Assam especially in Putni Garden of Barak Valley and Government had taken a decision to dispose of these tea gardens for better management by private parties;

(b) what steps Government propose to take in this regard to save the tea garden workers from utter ruination; and

(c) whether Government now propose to revive such financially starving and loss running tea gardens, and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) Tea Trading Corporation of India (TTCI), a wholly owned subsidiary of STC, is facing an acute financial crunch being a loss making company and has been unable to discharge its obligations. The total liability of the Company is estimated around Rs. 36 crores as on 31.1.1997.

TTCI has filed a petition in the Calctta High Court for liquidation of the company. The case is pending in the Court.